

VZCZCXRO4101  
PP RUEHHM  
DE RUEHHM #0574 2160958  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 040958Z AUG 09  
FM AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5985  
INFO RUEHHI/AMEMBASSY HANOI PRIORITY 3886  
RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY PRIORITY 6221

UNCLAS HO CHI MINH CITY 000574

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOE EAP/MLS, DRL/AWH AND DRL/IRF

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM KIRF](#) [PGOV VM](#)

SUBJECT: UBCV HOLDS MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR FORMER PATRIARCH UNDER HEAVY SECURITY

REF: 08 HCMC 625

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Over 3,000 members of the unrecognized Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) gathered at Nguyen Thieu Monastery in Binh Dinh province on July 23 to mark the first anniversary of the death of their late patriarch, Thich Huyen Quang. While there were no direct confrontations with authorities, some members reported harassment and intimidation by police trying to dissuade followers from attending the event, which took place under heavy security. Despite these reports, leaders say the ceremony took place without interruptions and UBCV monks returned home without incident. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Despite reports of harassment and intimidation by authorities of the organizers and 3,000 attendees, the death anniversary of former Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) Patriarch Thich Huyen Quang proceeded smoothly at Nguyen Thieu Monastery in Binh Dinh province on July 23 (reftel).

¶3. (SBU) The Venerable Thich Vien Dinh, Secretary General of the UBCV and the most senior monk in attendance, reported being stopped by a group of local policemen after his arrival in Binh Dinh on July 22. The police "invited" him to come down to the station to answer questions about "relevant matters" the next morning and threatened to expel him from the province if he refused to comply. Monk Dinh declined the request, citing his pre-occupation with preparing for the memorial ceremony. Monk Thich Vien Hy confirmed Monk Dinh's attendance at the services and his return to HCMC on July 26 without incident. (NOTE: Monk Dinh was not arrested as claimed by UBCV head-quarters in Paris in a press release dated July 23. We also have no information to confirm claims that UBCV leaders were prevented from attending the memorial services. END NOTE.)

¶4. (SBU) Venerable Thich Tam Lien, head of the UBCV Representative Board in Binh Dinh Province, also reported being stopped on the way to Nguyen Thieu Monastery and told ConGen he took a perilous mountain approach to the monastery in order to avoid further encounters. Several followers residing in Quang Tri, Thua Thien-Hue and Da Nang provinces also reported being approached by police who tried to pressure them into cancelling their trips to Binh Dinh. Current Patriarch Thich Quang Do told PolOff he chose to not travel to the ceremony due to poor health.

¶5. (SBU) On July 23, contacts reported approximately 100 plainclothes and uniform policemen patrolling the area around Nguyen Thieu monastery, filming and questioning gatherers. Despite this presence, authorities made no overt efforts to

prevent the ceremony from moving forward. Contacts also said about 50 local policemen searched nearby Thap Thap Pagoda, where monks and nuns who could not find space at Nguyen Thieu were temporarily sojourning. The monks reported that 30 to 40 plainclothes policemen also continued to monitor the monastery in the days immediately following the ceremony.

15. (SBU) UBCV Monk Thich Vien Hy commented that there was no reason for authorities to fear that the UBCV would hold any "clandestine meetings" during their time in Binh Dinh, especially because the ceremony coincided with the period of Vesak, when all monks and nuns are expected to devote themselves completely to their practice. He added that all of the followers were in Binh Dinh for one purpose only--to mourn the passing of their dear patriarch, Thich Huyen Quang.

FAIRFAX